

Anger can be a righteous blessing. Mark 3:1-5; Psalm 119:53. Anger can be righteous indignation in the face of that which is wrong, a quality without which no good character can flourish and no soul can stand against sin (Barclay).

Anger can be a sinful curse. Colossians 3:8A; James 1:19-20. Which it will be is entirely up to us. We therefore need to learn to be angry only when Jesus would be angry and to express anger only the way Jesus would express it, or as Paul put it in Ephesians 4:26, we must learn how to “be angry, and yet do not sin.”

What is anger? Anger is a God given emotion we should feel when something truly valuable is threatened with harm, is being hurt, or has been damaged so we will protect it from impairment or further injury.

Anger has at least three components: mental, physical, and behavioral. Anger has a ...

1. Mental component because our thoughts are what trigger anger. For example, we get angry when we think someone is harming our children.
2. Physical component because our bodies react to our feelings of anger. For example, when we get angry our heart rate goes up.
3. Behavioral component because we decide how to express our anger. For example, when we get angry we can choose to yell and scream or to say nothing until we have carefully thought things through and calmed down.

Anger can vary in ...

1. Power from us controlling it to it controlling us.
2. Intensity from mild annoyance to violent rage.
3. Duration from a moment to a lifetime.
4. Manifestation from repression so deep it is hidden from the one who is angry to expression so open everyone sees it.
5. Origination from thought of others with no thought of self to thought of self with no thought of others.
6. Retention from quickly letting it go once it has served its divine purpose to holding on to it and allowing it to settle into things God never intended it to become.
7. Effect from a righteous blessing to a sinful curse.

So it seems clear to me that we need to know two things. First, when is anger sinful? Second, what must we do so we do not sin in anger?

#### **Anger is sinful when we ...**

1. **Are too easily angered.** People should not have to walk on egg shells around us for fear that the slightest offense will set us off. Psalm 86:15; Proverbs 19:11; 14:29; 1 Corinthians 13:5.
2. **Jump to anger.** We must not become angry before we are sure we have a valid reason to be angry. James 1:19-20. Example: 1 Samuel 17:17-19, 26, 28.
3. **Are too intensely angry.** Our anger must be proportionate to the offense. Psalm 78:38-39. Example: Esther 3:5-6.
4. **Are angry for ungodly reasons.**
  - A. Selfishness. Luke 15:28-32; Acts 7:59-60.
  - B. Pride. 2 Kings 5:11-12; 2 Samuel 12:5-7A.
  - C. Hatred. Jonah 3:10-4:1; 4:4.
  - D. Ingratitude. Esther 5:9-13.
  - E. Jealousy. 1 Samuel 18:6-9.
  - F. Faithlessness. Psalm 37:7-9.
  - G. Etc.
5. **Have outbursts of anger.** Galatians 5:19-21. This is *thumos*, anger that quickly blazes up and quickly dies down but does tremendous damage in the heat of the moment. Proverbs 29:22B.
6. **Hold on to anger.** Ephesians 4:31.
  - A. This is *orge*, anger we hold onto and keep warm by brooding over past offenses. Isaiah 57:16A; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Amos 1:11; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 23:34A; Ephesians 4:26.
  - B. We can hold on to anger and not even know it (repression).

#### **What must we do so we do not sin in anger? We must ...**

1. **Understand what God says about anger.** What it is, when it is sinful, etc.
2. **Believe what God says about sinful anger.** That it is always a curse (Psalm 37:7-8), that doing anything out of sinful anger is worse than doing nothing at all, that we need to immediately turn away from it, etc.
  - A. Sinful anger is serious business. It can result in yelling (Ephesians 4:31), mocking (Nehemiah 4:1), name calling (1 Samuel 20:30A), strife (Proverbs 15:18[ 30:44]), violence (1 Samuel 20:33A), transference (2 Chronicles 16:10),

and disqualification from service (Titus 1:7). It gives the devil a weakness to exploit (Ephesians 4:26-27), makes life miserable for those around us (Proverbs 21:19 NKJV, "contentious and angry woman"), and can settle into bitterness (Hosea 12:14), grudge bearing (Psalm 55:3B), vengeance (Romans 12:19), and hatred (Ephesians 4:31), etc.

- B. Do not listen to anyone who tells you otherwise. "One of the greatest and most destructive myths about anger is the view that we need to get it out of our systems, let off steam, swear, holler, scream, pound a pillow, or find some other way to vent hostility in an effort to decrease feelings of anger. This idea is never suggested in scripture and neither is it supported by psychological research. In contrast, there is evidence that ventilation, expressions of rage, tantrums, and continual talking about our anger all tend to increase anger instead of reducing it" (Collins).
3. **Not make excuses for our sinful anger.** Genesis 4:5B-7; Job 32:1-5.
    - A. It is not easy to control our anger. It takes real strength. Proverbs 16:32. But, we can do it. God does not ask the impossible.
    - B. We control our anger when the price for not controlling our anger is higher than we want to pay. Illustration: What do we do if our boss calls when we are fighting with our spouse?
    - C. It is not our anger that commands respect. It is just that we have taught people they do not have to take us seriously until we are angry.
    - D. While nature, nurture, and environment influence behavior, they do not dictate it.
    - E. It does not matter who sinned in anger first. Proverbs 15:1.
    - F. We must own our anger. Instead of saying, "You make me so mad," we should say, "I get so mad." This is a subtle but significant difference.
  4. **Repent of our sinful anger.** Ecclesiastes 11:9-10.
  5. **Seek reconciliation with those we have hurt by our sinful anger (Mathew 5:21-26) or have hurt us with their sinful anger (Matthew 18:15; Proverbs 19:11).**
  6. **Flee temptation.**
    - A. Do not associate with angry people. Proverbs 22:24-25. Illustration: refereeing men's basketball.
    - B. Take care of our bodies. Eat properly, exercise, get plenty of rest, etc.
  7. **Think carefully and calm down before we do anything in anger.** Psalm 4:4; Nehemiah 5:6-7A NKJV, "And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers;"
    - A. If we do anything in anger before we think carefully and calm down, we make matters worse not better. James 1:19-20; Deuteronomy 19:4-6; Genesis 27:41-45.
    - B. Here are some questions we must ask and answer before we do anything in anger: Am I being too touchy? Have I jumped to anger? Am I too angry? Why am I angry? Am I controlling my anger or am I letting it control me? Should I still be angry or should I have already let it go?
    - C. If possible, we should go someplace alone to think carefully and calm down. Proximity to the source of our anger can frustrate our ability to do these things. Esther 7:7A.
    - D. Take whatever time it takes.
    - E. Repeat as often as needed.
  8. **Be patient.**
    - A. It takes time to learn better and to do better. Proverbs 19:19.
    - B. Do not give up. It takes time for our emotions to catch up with our choices. If we are truly repentant we will bear fruit worthy of repentance. Galatians 6:7-9.
    - C. When an offense comes to mind and the fire of anger threatens to reignite, we must remember that we have chosen to let it go and force our minds to dwell on better things. Illustrations: the God box, memorizing Ephesians 1.

Angry words! Oh, let them never from the tongue unbridled slip; may the heart's best impulse ever check them ere they soil the lip. Love is much too pure and holy, friendship is too sacred far, for a moment's reckless folly thus to desolate and mar. Angry words are lightly spoken, bitt'rest tho'ts are rashly stirred, brightest links of life are broken, by a single angry word.

What can we do to help other people be angry, and yet not sin? Proverbs 29:8. We must ..

1. Not needlessly provoke or irritate people. Psalm 106:29, 32; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21.
2. Anticipate when we might provoke people to anger, give them fair warning, and ask them not to be angry. Genesis 18:30, 32; 44:18.
3. Remain calm in the face of anger. Proverbs 15:1.
4. Give people the time and space they need to calm down. Genesis 27:44-45.
5. Reason with those who are reasonable. Exodus 32:11-14; Psalm 106:23; Judges 8:1-3.
6. Not reason with fools. Proverbs 29:9.
7. Ask God to help us help other people and to help the other people we are trying to help.